

Minister of National Health
and Welfare



Ministre de la Santé nationale
et du Bien-être social

58-16533

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OTTAWA, K1A 0K9
JUN 22 1988

Ms. Sheila Copps, M.P.
Hamilton East
House of Commons
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Copps:

Thank you for your letter of March 17, 1988, on environmental sensitivity. I am sympathetic to the concerns of those with illnesses caused by sensitivities to various chemicals in food, air or water.

The federal government and the Minister of Health do not have a role in defining medical conditions and recognizing specific illnesses. This is a matter on which the medical community must reach consensus. Medical matters such as questions of diagnosis, treatment and costs of illnesses are the mandate of the provinces rather than the federal government.

You may be interested to learn that my Department is taking steps to help alleviate some problems of those who are unusually sensitive, including additional labelling requirements for additives and excipients in foods and drugs, restrictions on smoking in public buildings, improvements in general air quality in federal buildings and requests for funding of research through the National Health Research and Development Program (NHRDP). The Department is engaged in measures to control human exposure to undesirable chemicals in

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food, air and water, through legislation such as the Food and Drugs Act, and the Environmental Contaminants Act and its successor, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. In addition, health advice is given to other departments who have the legislative responsibility for other Acts.

The Standing Committee on Health has recently heard the testimony of Mr. Brown on this issue; officials of the Department will be studying Mr. Brown's brief during their considerations on the whole issue.

Yours truly,

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